
CHAPTER II

Department of Defense/ Corps of Engineers Response

By 6 April the stage was set for a dramatic increase in the level of federal involvement in the cleanup operations. By that time there were roughly five hundred federal personnel in the Prince William Sound area, including four hundred Coast Guard (USCG) personnel and one hundred from other agencies. Government equipment on scene included three USCG cutters, six USCG aircraft, one National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) aircraft, six USCG portable pumps which were used to offload the barge, one USCG open water skimming system, seven Navy skimmers, and over thirty-six thousand feet of boom. The spill, which now covered an area sixty by one hundred miles, was moving in a southwesterly direction into the Gulf of Alaska. The heaviest concentrations of oil extended south from Smith Island in a nearly continuous sheen with heavy patches of emulsified oil between Knight Island and Green Island and in the passages between Bainbridge Pass and Latouche Pass.

Although operators had used chemical dispersants and burning on a limited basis, the actual cleanup was being done by mechanical means. Exxon was performing all of the cleanup work through a contract with VECO, Inc., a large local construction contractor that specialized in the support of oil companies in Alaska. Through VECO, Exxon essentially cornered the market in Alaska and in the Pacific states on available oil booms, skimmers, oil barges, floating hotels, and small skiff-sized work boats.

The spill affected one of the largest and most productive fishing regions in the world. The livelihoods of hundreds of fishermen from Valdez, Cordova, Seward, and other small villages were at risk. With the assistance of local fishermen VECO had set up booms and skimming operations at four hatcheries located in Prince William Sound. The salmon

smolt were due to be released from the hatcheries into the sound within weeks. Cleanup work underway in critical seal pupping areas had to be completed within two or three weeks.

White House officials were following events in Alaska with keen interest. President Bush, who had been elected with the pledge that he would be the “environmental president,” was under intense pressure from the media, the public, and Congress to respond. He directed Transportation Secretary Samuel K. Skinner and EPA Administrator William K. Reilly to evaluate the situation in Alaska first hand. Four days after the spill Reilly and Skinner hurried to Alaska where they spent a day and a half flying over the spill area and meeting with officials in Valdez. Secretary Skinner was briefed by the current on-scene coordinator and by Admiral Nelson. The delegation also met with Governor Steve Cowper, Director of the Alaska State Department of Environmental Conservation Dennis Kelso, and representatives of other interested organizations. They focused on the question of whether the federal government should assume control of the cleanup. Was Exxon doing everything that could be done or were there additional needs? Skinner and Reilly concluded that there was no need to federalize the cleanup operations. They later submitted a detailed report to the President with their assessment of the response and the effects of the spill.¹

While White House officials tracked the spill, an outraged Congress debated the nature of Exxon’s liability and questioned whether the spill should be federalized. At hearings on 6 April Admiral Paul A. Yost, Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard, assured the Subcommittee on the Coast Guard and Navigation of the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries that President Bush was “deeply concerned” about the environmental issues and “very interested” in the Coast Guard’s marine safety and environmental protection missions. He also assured them that the Coast Guard was exercising more control over the cleanup. “Frankly, we want to take full advantage of Exxon’s willingness to open their checkbook and fund this cleanup.”² Admiral Yost indicated that the fund for oil spill cleanup contained only \$3–\$4 million, and he was reluctant to federalize a spill that was costing over \$1 million a day with only \$4 million in his pocket. If the spill was federalized the USCG would have

“massive” contracting problems. Exxon, which was not bound by federal procurement procedures, could simply write out checks. Rather than federalizing the spill, Yost observed, “it would be much better if we could manage this spill, using Exxon as the checkbook.” In his testimony, however, Secretary Skinner now conceded that the response was “totally inadequate.”³

Members of the Senate Committee on Science and Transportation meeting the same day also seemed anxious to determine who was in charge in Alaska. Representatives of the Bush administration (i.e., Reilly and Skinner) defended Exxon. Reilly observed that Exxon had done everything that it was told to do, though Senator Ted Stevens from Alaska disagreed. Skinner assured the committee that the Coast Guard was directing the operations. He reminded the committee that there was no magic fix to the problem: “When you get up there you watch how it has moved and the vastness of it and you understand it is not a problem that is fixed by throwing money and equipment at it at this point.” The Coast Guard Commander was directing Exxon resources and telling Exxon officials what needed to be done. In a written statement to the committee, Admiral Yost noted that Exxon was “making every effort to fulfill its responsibilities in that area.” Despite the optimistic testimony, some committee members continued to favor federalizing the cleanup. The American people, they observed, were concerned that the federal government was not doing enough.⁴

Officials in the Pentagon also followed the situation closely. Major General James D. Smith, Director for Operations, Readiness, and Mobilization for the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans, Department of the Army, began monitoring the news reports as he would in the case of any catastrophic event in U.S. territory. Smith also served as Director of Military Support (DOMS) for the Defense Department in instances where the Secretary of the Army was designated as Executive Agent for a specific event, such as disasters or civil disturbances. As DOMS he took actions as directed by the Secretary of the Army and worked directly for the Secretary of Defense through the Secretary of the Army.

Early on Smith contacted the Chief of Engineers and Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Lieu-

tenant General Henry J. Hatch, and Brigadier General Patrick J. Kelly, Director of Civil Works, USACE. Smith recognized that the Corps would be a key player if the Defense Department became involved and that it had tremendous contracting capabilities.⁵

Both the Army and the Corps were eager to respond to the cleanup operations aggressively. In an era of improved relations with the Soviet Union, some suggested that the Army should emphasize its traditional role over the past two hundred years as nation builder rather than focusing on the forty years of the Cold War. Officials in Washington perhaps saw an opportunity to go back to that early role of service to the nation. In addition to looking back at the Army's historic nation building role, General Hatch had established a vision of the Corps as an environmental engineer agency. Corps staff supported the Chief's vision and looked for opportunities in the environmental arena. The Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, Robert W. Page, also advocated a stronger role for the Corps in environmental areas. The day after the grounding he called Governor Cowper and Commandant Yost to offer the Corps' assistance.⁶

General Kelly met with President Bush's Chief of Staff, Governor John Sununu, before the President directed the Department of Defense to become involved in the cleanup and had followup meetings with Sununu's representative, Richard Breeden, Assistant to the President for Issues Analysis. A week after the spill Assistant Secretary Page, Kelly, and Smith attended a White House meeting with Breeden, Sununu, and Skinner at which Yost requested that the Army supply troops. Page, Smith, and Kelly argued against this. Using troops to wipe rocks was not good training for soldiers and would deprive civilians in Alaska of employment. In addition, supporting troops in Alaska would present great logistical problems.

At a meeting with Secretary Cheney, Smith and Kelly laid out a series of options that the Defense Department could take if it became involved. Smith and Kelly emphasized the Corps' contracting capability and its ability to set up the structure required for the cleanup. They needed to establish a way to control resources that DOD might place in the area. They discussed moving command and control facilities,

transportation resources, and medical evacuation assets to Alaska and putting Engineer brigades in until contractors arrived. In such an isolated area, they observed, the first requirement was to establish command and control and communications. The structure was needed whether troops were used or not. Smith and Kelly recommended the use of one or more Navy command and control ships with the proper radios and helicopter landing platforms and the use of landing craft.

Smith and Kelly argued that with the high unemployment in Alaska and on the western seaboard they would have little trouble finding contractors to do the work. Smith also argued that if it came down to wiping rocks with rags, it would be better to do that with contractors than with soldiers. Soldiers' pay was much less than what Exxon was paying contract workers. Secretary Cheney concurred. The strategy that DOD recommended was to keep Exxon in as a player and to provide Exxon with any special equipment and expertise that it might need.⁷

On 6 April Richard Breeden advised Secretary Cheney's assistant, David S. Addington, that Governor Sununu had instructed him to prepare an action plan and presidential statement for use that day on federal assistance for the Alaska oil spill cleanup. Breeden had been working with Secretary Skinner and Commandant Yost on the plan and had presented it to Sununu, but Sununu wanted to be sure that DOD was "on board." Breeden's plan called for the President to announce that he was directing the Secretary of Defense to make available DOD facilities, equipment, and personnel to assist in the cleanup. Breeden intended for DOD to participate as follows: Navy personnel would provide and prepare floating facilities for logistics, equipment storage, communications, and dormitory service; Air Force would provide airlift for equipment and personnel for the cleanup; Army would provide 1,500 men for "on-the-ground" cleanup duty. Breeden had not consulted anyone in DOD about this. Addington recommended that the Secretary of Defense assign the DOD focal point responsibility to the Secretary of the Army, whose DOMS had the proper coordination capability.⁸

On 7 April Kelly and Smith accompanied Secretary Cheney to a cabinet meeting at the White House. They found

the cabinet members gathered informally in a meeting room outside the Oval Office. It quickly became clear that Secretary Skinner, Admiral Yost, and Interior Department and EPA people favored “throwing the massive cleanup problem square into the hands of the Defense Department.”⁹ Smith and Kelly had already informed Secretary Cheney that they strongly opposed any plan to put uniformed soldiers on the beaches in Alaska to clean rocks.

Yet, the Alaska congressional delegation called loudly for increased federal activity to demonstrate to their constituents and the rest of the American people that the federal government was doing something. At the informal cabinet meeting Cheney stated very strongly that he would not put troops on the beaches, and he was countered by the strident voices of the other cabinet members who disagreed with him. Standing outside the Oval Office Cheney saw for the first time the planned policy statement for Bush’s press conference, which provided for using troops, and he asked to see the President. After a minute’s pause while someone went in to check with the President, Cheney was ushered into the Oval Office and Secretary Skinner followed.

A few minutes later Skinner came out and informed General Smith that Secretary Cheney had prevailed. There would be no troops on the beaches. As President Bush stepped out of his office, he was confronted by some of the Alaskan congressional delegation, who complained that DOD would not have an active enough role if troops were not put on the beach. Bush held firm. The room emptied, and after exchanging a few words with General Smith and General Kelly, Bush went on into his press conference.”¹⁰

At the 7 April press conference President Bush announced that he was appointing Skinner to be responsible for mobilizing and coordinating all federal departments and agencies for the cleanup and directing DOD to assist by providing personnel, equipment, and facilities. Finally, President Bush named EPA Administrator William Reilly as coordinator of the long-term recovery of the ecology of the area.

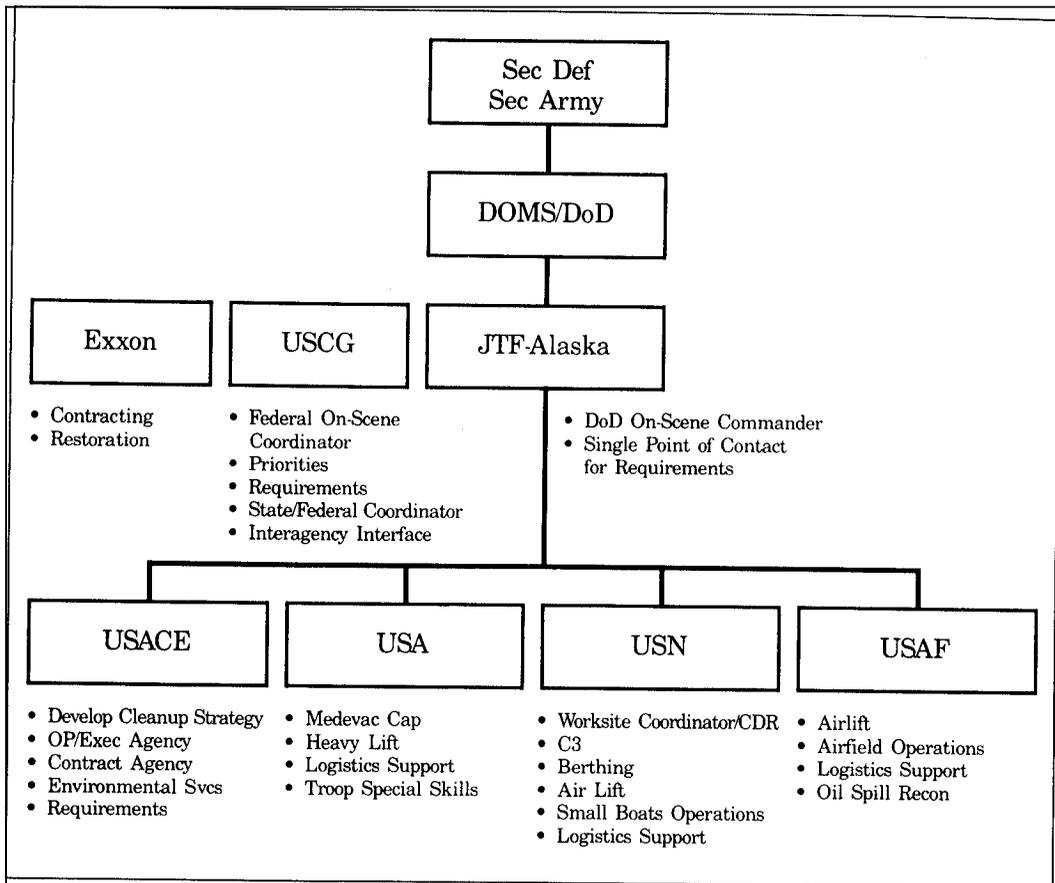
Smith was gratified that Cheney, a relatively new Secretary of Defense, had so staunchly defended the proposed policy that he and General Kelly had laid out earlier, a policy that did not include using Army troops for shoreline cleanup.

The result was, said Smith, “an intelligent application of DOD assets to assist in the oil spill.”¹¹

In anticipation of the Bush announcement, on 6 April Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney designated Secretary of the Army John O. Marsh, Jr., as Executive Agent for DOD assistance to the cleanup operations. As Executive Agent, Marsh would be responsible for planning, coordinating, and executing DOD participation. The Secretary of the Army has a long-standing responsibility for support to non-DOD agencies in the continental United States and its possessions. In 1968 the Secretary of the Army was designated Executive Agent for employment of federal resources during domestic civil disturbances. As Executive Agent, the Secretary of the Army acted with the full authority of the Secretary of Defense and was responsible to him and had full authority over all DOD components. At the same time Defense leadership created a separate office directly under the Secretary of the Army to provide adequate management—the Directorate of Civil Disturbance Planning and Operations, which was reorganized as the Director of Military Support (DOMS) in 1970. In 1973 the Director of Operations, Readiness, and Mobilization on the Army staff assumed additional responsibility as the DOMS.

At the time of the oil spill, in addition to the director, General Smith, and his deputy, there were seven officers in DOMS, including two from the Air Force, and one civilian secretary assigned to the Military Support Division of the Army Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations (ODCSOPS), which was responsible for the DOMS mission. DOMS normally established a multiservice task force to provide broad capabilities to plan, coordinate, and manage Defense support and to maintain adequate command and control. Although there was a basic task force structure, each task force organization changed depending on the current mission requirements.¹²

Later that day General Smith convened an oil spill DOMS joint task force (DOMS-JTF) with representatives from all the key elements of the armed services and set up business in the Army operations center in the Pentagon to coordinate military support at the DOD level. He told them what he thought the initial requirements would be and ordered



Alaska Oil Spill Command, Control & Coordination.

24-hour operations. The Secretary of the Army designated DOMS as the action agent to coordinate, manage, and task all DOD support to the Department of Transportation (DOT), and General Smith served as the Secretary's action officer to oversee the DOD effort. The DOMS staff then alerted the commands with potentially major roles: Pacific Command, Military Air Command, Army Forces Command (to which most Army units in Alaska were assigned), and the Corps of Engineers.¹³

Following established procedures DOD designated Lieutenant General Thomas G. McInerney, Commander of the Alaska Joint Task Force at Elmendorf Air Force Base, as the Defense Senior Representative (DSR) for Department of Defense assistance to the Coast Guard. Whenever a disaster strikes in the United States or its territories, DOD designates the senior flag level officer from the nearest military headquarters as DSR. As DSR, General McInerney provided on-scene DOD representation with the USCG for support requirements.

DOD officials activated the Alaska Joint Task Force (AK-JTF) on 7 April. The AK-JTF was a small standing nucleus of people assigned for planning purposes and for logistical operations and operations in general. General McNerney formed a task force around that nucleus. He augmented the team initially with people from the Alaska Air Command and then with additional personnel from the lower forty-eight states. The Joint Task Force was normally tailored to the particular emergency. Thus the Corps of Engineers, which is not normally a member of the task force, became involved. The JTF staff had recently gone through an exercise so it was relatively easy to pull together an effective operational staff quickly.¹⁴

General McNerney requested the assignment of a Navy flag officer as his deputy in anticipation of the major role projected for the Navy. Rear Admiral Edward B. Baker, Commander, Amphibious Group III in San Diego, was designated the Deputy Commander of the Alaska Joint Task Force.

On 7 April General McNerney, accompanied by the Corps' Alaska District (NPA) Engineer Colonel William Kakel, spent eight hours touring the oil spill area and met with Exxon and the Coast Guard representatives. He received briefings from Admiral Nelson, who served as the federal on-scene coordinator at the time. He determined that committing Defense Department personnel to perform cleanup would not be an effective use of that agency's resources. Both Kakel and McNerney saw clearly that they needed to do whatever they could to keep troops off the beaches because it would be very difficult to support them. McNerney's preliminary comments indicated that: everyone involved, including DOD, had to be prepared for extended operations; troops should be used as a last resort, only after all available local residents had been hired; early deployment of MEDEVAC assets might be desirable; and the U.S. Navy should be tasked to provide representatives on the assessment team with surface operations and oil spill salvage experience.¹⁵

When the President called upon the Defense Department to respond, the Corps became officially involved in the clean-up operations. On 6 April General Kelly and Brigadier General Patrick Stevens, Division Engineer, North Pacific Division, were attending a Department of Energy briefing in

Washington about the importance of oil from Alaska's North Slope when Kelly received an urgent call from General Hatch. Hatch informed Kelly that the Defense Department was going to be activated and directed him to contact General Smith about potential Corps involvement. Kelly and Stevens returned to Corps headquarters and then went to the Pentagon to meet with Smith.¹⁶

HQUSACE officials activated the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at 3:00 P.M. on 7 April for 24-hour operation. All information entering or leaving headquarters concerning oil spill activity would be coordinated through the EOC. An hour later, after briefing General Hatch, officials in headquarters notified the divisions. A crisis management team made up of representatives of various HQUSACE elements began meeting in the Emergency Operations Center every morning at 8:00 to review situation reports that had come in and to prepare information for the center's own report. The EOC held briefings twice a week to keep headquarters command and staff informed and remained in operation until 16 June, when the Corps' oil spill response mission ended.

Meanwhile, General Stevens returned to North Pacific Division on 6 April and left the next day for Alaska to work with Colonel Kakel to determine the Corps' program. Kakel, who had just returned from his visit to Valdez with General McInerney, had a somewhat different perspective than Stevens, who had just come from Washington. The next day they went to Valdez and flew over the sound. They received briefings from Coast Guard and Exxon officials at Valdez and discussed potential Corps support. During the visit Kakel and Stevens reached agreement on what the Corps could do. They recognized that the Corps should be supportive without offending the Coast Guard. Stevens observed some confusion about who was in charge, how the operation was going to be conducted, the scope of the operation, and the nature of DOD support and how would it be rendered.

General Stevens activated a division task force in North Pacific Division to keep him advised of the oil spill activities. He decided not to activate the Division's emergency operations center, but rather to have Alaska District's EOC be the central point for disseminating information.¹⁷

On Thursday, 6 April, Alaska District formed a crisis management team for the oil spill cleanup and opened its

emergency operations center, a combination lunchroom and conference room that converted to an emergency operations center. Alaska District's emergency operations center went to 24-hour operation the next day. Much of the job of the NPA EOC was to coordinate activities and information. It was the channel for information and taskings in and out of the District. The District's EOC collected reports put out by Exxon, the Coast Guard, the Regional Response Team (RRT), and the Joint Task Force and generated its own report. It did contingency planning, evaluated the types of contracting mechanisms that would be available on short notice, and contacted suppliers to find out what kind of equipment was available for use in the cleanup. Alaska District's EOC would operate sixty-five days, from 6 April to 9 June, in its longest emergency operation.

Alaska District's deputy emergency manager, Emergency Management Section Chief Merv Mullins, had begun participating in RRT meetings on 27 March where he received information from the Coast Guard to pass on to the District's executive staff.

As the Army Corps of Engineers began to prepare its own response to the spill, the Director of Military Support made plans to send a team of experts to Alaska to assess the situation. There was pressure on the federal government and the Pentagon to pump money into the cleanup and to do something to provide quick visibility, but Pentagon officials did not want to commit a lot of resources and make mistakes that the media would pick up on. These officials needed to put experts in the field to observe the problems and make recommendations so that they could make intelligent decisions. The team was a means of getting the best information possible before making concrete recommendations for DOD involvement.

General Smith and his joint staff organized the team with help from General Kelly. They first identified specific skills that they thought would be required to clean up the spill and then designated certain types of people. General Kelly placed John P. Elmore, Chief of the Headquarters Operations, Construction, and Readiness Division, on the team, where Elmore would play a key role as the senior DOD civilian. He, in turn, obtained Corps assistance and expertise in areas where



Lieutenant Colonel Roy Carlson (left), John Elmore (center), and Colonel William Kakel (right).

he anticipated the Corps might be involved.¹⁸ From North Pacific Division Elmore requested a biologist or environmental specialist (James R. Reese); a dredging expert (Robert J. Hopman); a contracting specialist (William J. Doran); and an emergency operations specialist (Paul Zepernick). Team members from the Division had little instruction beforehand, just one conference call with Alaska District. They met Elmore in the Seattle airport on Saturday, 8 April, and during the flight he briefed them and showed them the first oil spill documents that they had seen. Elmore instructed them that they were going to Alaska to look for a way for DOD to help in the cleanup effort. The five men arrived in Anchorage later that afternoon.¹⁹

The team, headed by Colonel Thomas Wilson, Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff, Alaska Joint Task Force, consisted of nineteen representatives from the Navy, Corps of Engineers, AK-JTF, Office of the Surgeon General, and USA Health Service Command, plus a Coast Guard liaison, Lieutenant Commander Glenn A. Wiltshire. Wilson and Elmore

emphasized that the mission of the DOMS team was not to take over the cleanup but to determine the available resources within their particular areas of expertise that could be brought to bear and to offer those resources to the FOSC and Exxon. If there were requirements for additional expertise, the members were to inform General Smith. Colonel Wilson conceded, however, that beyond this mission there were some "political aspects." It was important to have a "visible federal presence involved," and the team considered this in its assessment. Corps members of the assessment team had a dual mission: to evaluate DOD resources in general and look at possible roles for the Air Force, Army, and Navy, and to evaluate Corps resources specifically.²⁰

The DOMS team focused on the following areas: logistical support, including billeting, messing, and morale support for military, civilian, contractor, and volunteer personnel; transportation requirements in Alaska; command and control requirements; communications presently in place and additional requirements; missions the Navy could execute; availability of docking facilities and support; air support, including airfield availability, air traffic management, and control requirements; assistance to decontamination efforts; the number of military personnel required and what missions they could perform; methods for disposal of contaminated materials; reimbursement for DOD efforts, including the procedures for recording DOD costs at the JTF level; and additional equipment requirements, specifically Corps dredges in Portland.²¹

The team met for the first time on 9 April and was briefed by General McNerney and his staff. The team would meet with Colonel Wilson every day at 8:00 A.M. Most of the interaction between team members from different service branches occurred at these morning briefings. Corps members gathered each evening to discuss possible Corps involvement and to work on contingency plans. The Division members worked closely with their Alaska District counterparts (Tom Carter, Kirk Shadrick, and Guy McConnell). The team worked eight days straight, fifteen hours a day, constantly observing, discussing, and planning.²²

On 10 April the DOMS team had discussions with Coast Guard and Exxon representatives and state officials at Valdez

and toured the spill area by helicopter. Light snow, low visibility, and high winds in the spill area hampered the assessment. Around midnight that evening the last of the team representatives, Navy representatives from U.S. Pacific Command, arrived at Elmendorf.

John Elmore returned to Valdez on 11 April, accompanied by Colonel Kakel, Hopman, and Reese. There they coordinated with the on-site technical experts and made helicopter overflights in the spill area. Elmore, Kakel, and the DOMS team members discussed the possible deployment of an Army Corps of Engineers dredge and other items with Admiral Nelson. Elmore and Kakel presented an overview of Corps expertise and capabilities that could be made available. DOMS team representatives returned to Valdez and Cordova again the following day. Personnel in Cordova assessed the feasibility of staging and supporting Army MEDEVAC helicopters there. The team also provided input into the update briefings for Admiral Yost. Team personnel met with General McInerney to receive guidance and make recommendations about possible DOD support.²³

Team members initially concluded that the cleanup strategy was satisfactory and effectively addressed local concerns, specifically economic and environmental issues. Colonel Morton V. Plumb, USAF, Director of Joint Operations for AK-JTF, reported, "The general consensus of the team members was that the strategy formulated by Exxon/USCG is thorough and represents the best efforts of a large group of very talented specialists." As details of their plan became known, he added, "much of the criticism leveled at their organizational effort will be allayed."²⁴

Throwing in troops was the first action that the team considered, but they rejected that idea because of the infrastructure required to support those troops. The first possibility for Corps involvement that stood out was the use of the dredges. Team members recognized that the dredges would have to be converted in order to recover oil, but concluded that, once converted, they could be useful as skimmers, as containment barges, and as command and control platforms.²⁵

In his initial observation, the Corps environmental specialist, James Reese, noted that the Corps could call in its archaeologists and environmental assessors and could help

move fish if hatcheries were threatened. Contracting specialists Bill Doran and Paul Zepernick observed that Exxon contracting with VECO was working well. Corps members were frustrated that they could not do more. Their recommendations were tempered by the stiff restrictions that the state of Alaska had put on the cleanup.²⁶

On Friday, 14 April, John Elmore accompanied General McInerney to Valdez to brief Commandant Yost and Admiral Robbins on the team's findings and recommendations. The briefing covered the results of the DOMS team study and DOD resources available for possible support activity. After conducting final briefings with Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations and Logistics John W. Shannon and General McInerney on 16 April, the team dispersed. Robert Hopman stayed behind for another week to help deploy the dredges.²⁷

The team's final recommendations dealt with support in the following areas: communications, logistics and transportation, medical, naval support, aviation movement, and the Corps of Engineers. In the area of communications, the team noted that existing communications at Valdez met the current requirements. For ship to shore communications, there were enough UHF and VHF nets that linked the state, Coast Guard, and Exxon representatives and the control vessels at sea as well as beach parties ashore. More UHF satellite communications radios would be needed if additional forces were deployed.

In looking at logistics and transportation the team found that General McInerney had already dispatched a logistics liaison team to Valdez to handle requirements. An AK-JTF response team was in place at Elmendorf AFB to handle the requirements for the operations. The capability to support non-Alaska-based forces was "extremely limited." However, most Alaska-based forces had sufficient organic support to deploy within the operations arena. Using troops would require the establishment of base camps with appropriate support (i.e., billeting, messing, shower facilities, laundry, and associated sanitation facilities).

The team observed that naval support already consisted of 22 oil skimmers and a command, control, communications van for coordinating these skimmers. The Navy could provide,

if needed, the U.S.S. *New Orleans*, U.S.S. *Juneau*, U.S.S. *Fort McHenry*, LCM-8 landing craft, CH-46 helicopters, and two non-self-propelled barges. There was at that time a need to house roughly four hundred workers in Valdez. Rental of a Navy berthing barge would solve this problem.

In the area of aviation, the team found that space was limited at the Valdez and Cordova airports. Each could handle up to two C-141s or one C-5A aircraft. Valdez and Cordova would require aviation support personnel and equipment. Major activities could be supported from Elmendorf AFB and Seward, which could accept increased aviation support.

Finally, the team reported on potential Corps of Engineers contributions such as engineering services and design support. The Corps could manage large design projects and provide engineering support in these ways: develop initial and long range plans for cleanup operations; design temporary camp facilities and utilities; design incineration facilities for oil work and debris; provide photo surveillance and remote sensing; and provide sampling and testing of contaminated water, soils, and hazardous and toxic waste. The Corps dredging fleet of four could be used for oil skimming, as command and control centers, or to support a number of satellite oil skimmers while serving as a command and control center for the surrounding vicinity.

The Corps could also provide support in the areas of construction, contract administration, technical advice, and environmental evaluations. It could provide laboratory and research assistance from its five major research and development labs and eight Division labs, which performed a wide range of material, water quality, and chemical testing and sampling. These labs could provide oversight of the cleanup. In the area of power generation, the Corps had eleven emergency power generators, located at Fort Belvoir, Toole Army Depot, and Fort Monmouth, that could be in Prince William Sound in 56 to 104 hours.²⁸

Although the team investigated and reported potential Defense Department contributions and costs, it never recommended that DOD take over the work. Secretary Skinner, EPA Administrator Reilly, Assistant Secretary Shannon, Breeden, Addington, and General Smith, as well as representatives from DOMS and from the Coast Guard, reviewed the

teams' recommendations on 17 April at a meeting at the Department of Transportation.²⁹

By the time the DOMS team submitted its final report, the Defense Department was already providing considerable support to the cleanup operations. DOD support had actually begun on 25 March, the day after the grounding, when the Coast Guard asked the Navy for support. The first airlift of Navy equipment occurred on Sunday, 26 March, when two Marco Class V skimmers and associated equipment and operators were flown from Travis AFB to Anchorage. On Friday, 31 March, in response to a second Coast Guard request, the Navy arranged to fly five additional skimmers to Alaska. During the weekend, 1–2 April, one C-5A with two skimmer systems departed Travis AFB and one C-5A and one C-141 with three skimmer systems, 6,000 feet of offshore oil containment booms, and associated equipment left from Williamsburg, Virginia. On 4 April an additional 16,000 feet of containment boom departed Travis AFB, one C-5 from Norfolk Naval Air Station, and one C-5 from Travis AFB. The next day the Navy mobilized fifteen additional skimmers from Stockton, California, and Williamsburg for transport to Anchorage. This equipment was in place by 10 April. The Navy later established a management and support complex at Valdez to assist the Coast Guard and Exxon in effectively using Navy assets.

When DOD became involved General McNerney and Colonel Wilson sent logistics teams to Valdez to provide a link between Exxon, the Coast Guard, and DOD concerning defense resources. Exxon requested the equipment, USCG verified the need for the equipment, and the logistics people forwarded requests to the Pentagon and followed the movement of the resources until they got where they needed to go in Alaska. On 8 April, twenty-four hours after the Bush speech, General McNerney deployed Captain Greg Hellesto and Master Sergeant Steven Patterson of Alaska Air Command (AAC) logistics, Captain Monica Aloisio from AAC public affairs, and Master Sergeant William Reavis from the 1931st Communications Wing to Valdez to work with Coast Guard and Exxon officials. The 616th Aerial Port Squadron at Elmendorf AFB continued to receive and offload C-5 and C-141 aircraft from Europe and the lower forty-eight states.

By 27 April they had handled at least twenty-four Military Airlift Command transport aircraft bringing in over 1,063 tons of cargo for the cleanup. The 1931st Communications Wing established an extensive communications system using satellite radios and computers to aid coordination between Exxon command center, the Coast Guard Marine Safety Office in Valdez, the air operations center at the Valdez airport, and the Joint Task Force command center.

The largest DOD contributions were Navy berthing ships. Because of the remote location of the cleanup sites, there was a desperate need for floating facilities to house shoreline cleanup workers. In response the Navy provided amphibious transport docks (LPDs) or dock landing ships (LSDs). The U.S.S. *Juneau* left its home port, San Diego, California, on 18 April and arrived in Alaska on 24 April. The U.S.S. *Fort McHenry* left San Diego on 28 April and arrived in Alaska on 4 May.

Over the summer months the Navy replaced the *Juneau* first with the *Cleveland* and the *Ogden*, and then with the *Duluth*. Meanwhile, the U.S.S. *Mount Vernon* relieved the *Fort McHenry* and then left the cleanup operations on 18 July without a replacement, reducing the naval presence to one ship. The U.S.S. *Duluth* sailed without replacement on 16 September, ending the naval ship presence in the oil spill cleanup operations.

The ships functioned as “floating hotels” providing medical, laundry, housing, dining, and sleeping facilities for shoreline cleanup workers. They also provided communications support and functioned as command and control platforms and helipads for forward deployment of helicopters. They supported base operations of the landing craft, providing maintenance, fuel, and docking. Deployed with the ships were Marine Corps CH-46 helicopters and Army medical evacuation helicopters, which performed a variety of essential missions. Naval ship operations centered in Prince William Sound and were especially important in open sea areas because commercial berthing vessels could not operate in the rough water.³⁰

DOD also provided military airlift support. U.S. Air Force airlift operations peaked during the period 4 to 9 April. The Air Force flew over forty sorties of C-141, C-5, and C-130

aircraft, ferrying more than 1,100 tons of cargo from as far away as Helsinki, Finland. They transported oil skimmers, communications trailers, tow boats, boom and rigging vans, boom mooring systems, general purpose boats, power packs, and generators.

In addition to Navy berthing ships and Air Force airlift support, the Army provided helicopters. With the arrival of the first Navy ship, a large contingent of military personnel were present in Alaska. This required that helicopters be on-site to provide emergency MEDEVAC. Initially two UH-1 (MEDEVAC) and two CH-47 (non-MEDEVAC) helicopters from the 6th Infantry Division, Fort Richardson, Alaska, met this requirement. Because most operations were over water, MEDEVAC aircraft with a twin-engine capability were required; three MEDEVAC UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters were deployed from Fort Benning, Georgia, to Alaska via Air Force cargo airlift on 19 April. By 21 April the Army had provided seven helicopters and thirty-six helicopter crews.

Helicopter crews underwent deck training to permit them to land and take off from helipads aboard ships at sea. Thus helicopters could operate from aboard ships and respond better in an emergency. These helicopters performed many functions ranging from utility missions, such as the transport of supplies, to the evacuation of military and civilian personnel. After the last Navy ship departed, the helicopters returned to Fort Benning.

DOD also contributed essential landing craft, which ferried crews from berthing/support vessels anchored offshore onto contaminated beaches. Nine Navy landing craft arrived with the U.S.S. *Juneau* on 24 April and ten more arrived with the U.S.S. *Fort McHenry* on 4 May. Exxon subsequently leased the following quantities of landing craft from the Army's reserve component: four from the California Army Reserve, eight from the Washington State National Guard, and three from the Alaska National Guard. These lease agreements required Exxon to transport them to the oil spill area (rather than them arriving under their own power) and to provide them with maintenance, fuel, and crews.

At the Coast Guard's request, DOD provided 251 Lightweight Decontamination Apparatus units for use by Exxon shoreline cleanup crews. These units are power driven,

portable devices capable of producing and spraying hot water to decontaminate personnel and equipment. They were carried on shore to provide high pressure heated water.

By 25 April, a month after the grounding, DOD had committed substantial resources to the cleanup effort. The Army had put into action three UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters, three UH-1H Huey helicopters, and two Army Corps of Engineers dredges. Three Army air traffic controllers, helicopter crews, and fifty crewmen on the dredges were involved in the cleanup. The Navy contributed 20 skimming vessels, 2 Voss skimmers, 10 tow boats, a 2,000-foot boom van, 20 mooring systems, 2 rigging vans, 2 cleaning vans, 4 inflatable boats, 3 Navy personnel, and 87 contract personnel in addition to the *Juneau* and *McHenry*. DOD support to the cleanup peaked in the week 4 to 8 May. On 4 May there were 854 DOD personnel assigned to the oil spill joint task force.³²

Initially there was a great deal of uncertainty and controversy about the role that the Defense Department should and could play in the cleanup operations. Through weeks of discussions in Washington and the efforts of the DOMS Assessment Team in Alaska, the role became more clearly defined. The Defense Department ultimately provided a broad range of resources from berthing ships to decontamination units.